

On April 17, Secretary Víctor Manuel Toledo, head of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), received a letter from him in which he expressed his concern about the sovereign decision made by our government to deny permits for the import of glyphosate, the most widespread and dangerous pesticide in the world, as I explain later.

First of all, I want to inform you that SEMARNAT has as one of its main objectives to promote the ecological transition and, consequently, the gradual, not sudden, food transition from agro-industrial systems to ecological systems, that is, towards the healthy production of healthy food. Agro-industrial systems are the cause, not only in Mexico but in the rest of the world, of severe damage to environmental and human health, due to the use of agrochemicals, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, transgenic crops, etc.

For this reason, SEMARNAT, in complete harmony with what has been expressed by the President of Mexico, embraces a policy of gradual elimination of pesticides in general, starting with glyphosate, and of GM crops, including corn, soybeans and cotton.

Contrary to what you express, there is abundant scientific research that demonstrates the harmful nature of glyphosate, which is why it has been prohibited or restricted in many countries, such as Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Thailand, Bermuda, Sri Lanka, and some Autonomous Communities of the Kingdom of Spain, Argentina and New Zealand. Our decision has been made based on the analysis of various scientific documents such as the E. Martín-Rossi Glyphosate Toxicological Anthology (5th edition, 2020), which lists 1108 scientific articles, and the report on this pesticide by the National Council of Science and Technology from Mexico (April 2020).

From the data offered by this set of scientific studies, it is concluded that glyphosate is a toxic agent highly dangerous to human health, since it has been proven that it generates encephalopathy, autism, parkinsonism, malformations and various types of cancer, in addition to affecting the endocrine, reproductive, immune, digestive, liver, kidney, nervous and cardiovascular systems of people.

IARC, the research body of the World Health Organization (WHO), concluded, after an extensive review of all available scientific literature, that exposure to glyphosate is genotoxic and decided to classify glyphosate as probably carcinogenic to humans.

In addition, glyphosate is toxic to different species of crustaceans, molluscs, oligochetes, algae, fungi, phytoplankton and zooplankton, amphibians, turtles, arachnids, birds, mammals and, most worrying, beneficial insects and pollinators. Finally, there is evidence of the permanence of this pesticide in water, soil, air and food.

Today, glyphosate generates the greatest biological destruction in the entire natural history of the planet: it is applied to more than 54 million hectares of transgenic soy in five countries in South America (Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina). On this surface, which is almost

the size of France, there is only soy and it has been devastated with forests, jungles and tropical thickets, and thousands of citizens have been contaminated and sickened.

Our decision is based on scientific evidence and also on the adoption of the precautionary principle, which presupposes that, when there is a manifest threat of serious or irreversible damage, the absence of scientific evidence cannot represent an obstacle to proposing measures that prevent deterioration and environmental or human degradation. Consequently, the precautionary principle also requires not to approve or even cancel all those activities that pose a threat, even in those cases in which the scientific evidence is inconclusive.

In conclusion, the transition towards agroecological practices represents a fundamental strategy of SEMARNAT. Given the importance of adequately protecting the ecosystems we share, we invite the United States of America to consider adopting these practices. The situation of the world today requires new directions and new paradigms in food production, that is, a new ethic of respect for human and planet health.

We appreciate your offer to contact the agricultural experts of the Embassy of the United States of America in Mexico to carry out a joint analysis of the subject. Likewise, I propose that you carry out a public debate between our respective agencies that clearly illustrates the arguments for and against this pesticide.

As one of the most mega-diverse countries, Mexico is obliged to implement public policy measures more related to the conservation of biodiversity, as it has historically and officially stated in its various participations before the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to safeguard therefore the human right to health.

Awaiting your prompt reply, I extend a cordial greeting.